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SOFTBALL

Softball: Hopewell out to win it all

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From left to right, seniors Jessie Taylor and Janna Lewis, and junior Kristy Giragosian hope to lead Hopewell High's softball team to a state title. (YALONDA M. JAMES yjames@charlotteobserver.com)

Hopewell's softball team feels like it has unfinished business.

The Titans lost on a bloop hit in the seventh inning of a fourth-round playoff against North Davidson last season, and finished 23-5. An excellent record, but not Hopewell's destination.

"We've set high goals, and are just trying to pick up from there," coach David Webster said. "We don't want to finish second or third. Our goal is the state championship, and we realize everyone has the same goal."

Hopewell graduated some talented seniors, but has a solid core that should make it a contender again.

Three seniors have signed with colleges -- shortstop Janna Lewis (S.C. Upstate), pitcher/first baseman Christina Melton (Campbell) and outfielder Jessie Taylor (Mars Hill).

Outfielder Kristy Giragosian, a junior, has committed to College of Charleston.

Lewis batted .446 with three home runs and 22 RBIs last season, and Melton was 12-2 on the mound and hit .430 with 21 RBIs.

Lewis slammed three home runs, and Melton hit two. Taylor batted .360.

Hopewell has a standout softball history, with N.C. 4A championships in 2002 and '03. But that was before any of this team arrived.

Webster said it is never easy advancing through the playoffs in the western half of N.C., with established powers Butler (two-time reigning 4A champ), Central Cabarrus, Alexander Central and North Davidson.

"The girls remember how close we came last season," Webster said. "They know how it felt when that bloop hit fell in." Softball